Cellular and Unified Access Service Providers. The revenue implications of reduction of another 2% of AGR in respect of cellular licensees who were granted licences on the basis of bids invited in 1995 for grant of licence in telecom circle service area were estimated to be Rs. 83 crores per annum.

The proposal to increase the Foreign Direct Investment was placed before the Cabinet in January, 2004. The Cabinet decided to defer the proposal. Finance Minister, in his Budget speech has proposed that the FDI cap be enhanced to 74%.

After considering the recommendations of TRAI, the guidelines of Intra Circle Mergers and acquistions have been issued on 21st February, 2004.

Ministry of Finance has requested various financial institutions to take necessary action to assess debt relief steps on case-to-case basis depending upon the present financial condition of the companies and viability of prospective schemes.

Under Sea Cable between India and Singapore

105. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that VSNL has recently started working on laying 3175 kms. of under sea cable in the Indian sea bed between India and Singapore;

(b) if so, the details of bandwidth capacity of the cable; and

(c) by when the project is expected to be completed and by when the commercial operations would start?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) VSNL is implementing a submarine fibre optic cable system known as the Tata Indicom India-Singapore Cable System (TIISCS) linking Chennai, India to Singapore. The bandwidth capacity of the cable is 5.12 Tbps (Tera bits per second).

(c) This project is likely to be ready for service by end of the current financial year.

Indian officials for Iraq polls

†106. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to depute Indian officials in Iraq to conduct polls there;

(b) if so, the reasons behind such a decision; and

(c) the source from where Government received a request to send Indian officials to Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The UN Electoral Assistance Division for Iraq, based in Amman, has made the request through our Embassy in Baghdad.

Ban on wearing turban in France

107. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is fact that Government of France had imposed a ban on the wearing of turban and other religious symbols for Sikhs residing in that country;

(b) If so, the details thereof;

(c) Whether it is also a fact that a Sikh delegation from France had recently met him and the Prime Minister seeking help from Government of India in this regard;

(d) If so, whether the matter has been taken up with the Government of France; and

† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.